

# The Use of Lexical Cohesion in Reading and Writing

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## Introduction

In Japan, the national curriculum standards have been reformed by the former Ministry of Education known now as MEXT<sup>1</sup>. MEXT is making an effort to shift the focus of EFL pedagogy from “correctness and accuracy” in English to “communicative ability” (MEXT 1998). In response to this, schools have laid emphasis on students’ ability to express themselves orally in English as native speakers. This attempt, however, resulted in grammar and lexis being minimised in schools. Conclusively, students enter universities with insufficient knowledge of grammar and lexis. Considering, however, that “[l]anguage learners will need to develop the full range of lexical strategies” (Carter & McCarthy 1988: 219) to improve their communicative competence, lexical knowledge must be considered essential to L2 learners.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how a working knowledge of discourse-organising vocabulary, especially lexical cohesion, can help EFL students in reading and writing. The subjects in this paper are in Extensive Reading classes, which are designed to improve the skills of reading fiction in English: the aim is to get students used to reading books in English without the aid of dictionaries and to cultivate their ability to interpret the

story and understand the structure by reading as many books as possible. In classes, an emphasis is laid on the practice of guessing unfamiliar word meanings through the knowledge of discourse-organising vocabulary. An examination of how such knowledge can help students' English skills in reading and writing will be undertaken.

There are three main sections to this paper. After the Literature Review (Section 1), the Methodology (Section 2) will be introduced. The Discussion (Section 3) will be divided in two parts; the Functioning of Cohesion in: (1) Reading and (2) Writing. In order to investigate the degree to which a knowledge of lexical cohesion influences reading/writing, three types of reading exercises plus one kind of written exercise will be analysed and discussed. Following the results, recommendations will be made offering suggestions in the use of lexical cohesion in reading/writing classes at tertiary level.

## **1. Literature Review**

Lexical competence is a necessary element of communicative competence, which is the ability to communicate successfully and appropriately. DeCarico (2001) introduces the view held by many researchers that learners should initially be taught a large productive vocabulary of at least two thousand high-frequency words. Low-frequency words can be acquired while L2 learners are exposed to reading/listening. That is, low-frequency words can be learned by practicing guessing new word meanings through clue words found in discourse (Clarke and Nation 1980). By guessing new word meanings through the knowledge of basic vocabulary, L2 learners can interpret discourse more precisely. In providing students with an understanding of organising elements of discourse, I believe it will necessary to teach them how and where to look for clue items.

## 1.1 Discourse Organising Vocabulary

Lexical items can, at times, have a significant structuring role in texts. As Winter (1977) points out, co-ordinating/subordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *because* and *if*, and adverbials such as *however*, *consequently* and *therefore* can be clue items to understand the lexical relationships in discourse. In addition to this, reference words such as *this*, and *that* can also be useful clue items. They refer to other words anaphorically/cataphorically, which provide more information to words/phrases. Halliday & Hasan (1976) add ‘general noun’ to pronouns, which means “a small set of nouns having generalized reference within the major noun classes, those such as ‘human noun,’ ‘place noun,’ ‘fact noun’ and the like” (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 274). For example, *people*, *thing*, *place*, and *idea* are included in general nouns. They also refer/replace/summarise other words as pronouns do. In response to Winter (1977) and Halliday & Hasan (1976), Francis (1994) categorises referring words, which she terms ‘labels,’ into two groups: an ‘advance label’ which means cataphoric words and a ‘retrospective label’ which means anaphoric words. She states that an advance label allows “the reader to predict the precise information that will follow” and a retrospective label indicates to the reader “exactly how that stretch of discourse is to be interpreted, and this provides the frame of reference within which the subsequent argument is developed” (Francis 1994: 84–85). However different they are, both will help the reader to collect information to understand the text. As a result, it can be considered that a knowledge of discourse organising vocabulary might complement L2 learners’ lack of vocabulary and assist them in text interpretation.

Although discourse organising vocabulary is discussed (see above) in terms of grammar, it is necessary to consider lexical items semantically. That is, it is necessary to consider how lexical items are associated in

terms of meaning in discourse. Considering the relationship between lexical items in discourse, Halliday & Hasan (1976) categorise lexical items into two groups: ‘grammatical cohesion,’ which they classify into four types: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, and ‘lexical cohesion,’ which they classify into two types: reiteration and collocation. Even though they advocate that general nouns exist on the borderline between two categories, the lexical items discussed above can be considered to be in grammatical cohesion. The semantic relationship between lexical items can be considered to be lexical cohesion.

## **1.2 Lexical Cohesion**

Halliday & Hasan (1976) classify reiteration into four types: the same word, a synonym/near-synonym, a superordinate, and a general word. For example, ‘a boy’ can be replaced in the following sentences with ‘the boy’ (the same word), ‘the lad’ (a synonym/near-synonym), ‘the child’ (a superordinate), and ‘the idiot’ (a general word) (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 279–80). Meanwhile, they recognise collocation as an important part of creating cohesion in connected text. Collocation refers to the semantic and structural relation among words, which native speakers can use subconsciously for comprehension or production of a text. They argue the case of collocation as follows:

The cohesive effect ... depends not so much on any systematic relationship as on their tendency to share the same lexical environment, to occur in COLLOCATION with one another. In general, any two lexical items having similar patterns of collocation – that is, tending to appear in similar context – will generate a cohesive force if they occur in adjacent sentences. [emphasis Halliday & Hasan]

(Halliday & Hasan 1976: 286)

A ‘cohesive force’ will produce a ‘cohesive tie,’ which is the relationship between a cohesive item and the item it presupposed in a text. In other words, collocational links between lexical items create cohesion.

In response to Halliday & Hasan (1976), other researchers have discussed lexical cohesion (Gutwinski 1976, Carrell 1984, Hoey 1991, Martin 1992, Cook 1994). However, cohesion can be concluded as “the means by which texts are linguistically connected” (Carter 1998: 80). It is significant to recognise that lexical cohesion cannot exist without sentences. That is, cohesive words should be discussed not only as the meaning relations which hold between items, but also as the explicit expression of those meaning relations within a text. Ultimately, it is necessary to consider cohesion as “a set of discourse semantic systems” (Martin 2001: 37).

### **1.3 Lexical Cohesion and Text**

Brown & Yule (1983) focus on the relationship between cohesion and text, and indicate that lexical cohesion is not always necessary for text to produce semantic relations between sentences, as in the following example:

A: There’s the doorbell.

B: I’m in the bath.

(Brown & Yule 1983: 196)

These sentences have no lexical cohesion, but readers will understand that the sequence of sentences constitutes a text. This means that text can exist without lexical cohesion, though lexical cohesion cannot exist without text. Brown & Yule (1983) explain this case as follows:

[T]he reader may indeed use some of the formal expressions of cohesive relationships present in the sentences, but he is more likely to try to build

a coherent picture of the series of events being described and fit the events together, rather than work with the verbal connections alone.

(Brown & Yule 1983: 197)

Moreover, an example of the inadequacy of cohesive ties between sentences has to be considered. Brown & Yule's quotation from Enkvist (1978) is shown here:

I bought a Ford. A car in which President Wilson rode down the Champs Elysées was black. Black English has been widely discussed. The discussions between the presidents ended last week. A week has seven days. Every day I feed my cat. Cats have four legs. The cat is on the mat. Mat has three letters.

(Enkvist 1978: 197)

Even though this text has lexical cohesion, it cannot be called a coherent text. This means that a text including lexical cohesion cannot always produce coherence. Here, the text fails to deliver any message to the reader. As Brown & Yule (1983) advocate, cohesive ties do not always lead readers to a coherent interpretation of what they have read. Namely, it is significant to teach L2 learners how to understand the coherence of a text when reading/writing. Cohesion is never necessary nor sufficient to create coherence, though most discourse includes cohesion. It is necessary to recognise that “[c]ohesion is a manifestation of certain aspects of coherence, and a pointer towards it, rather than its cause or necessary result” (Cook 1994: 34). That is, cohesive ties have to be considered as a “manifestation of how we are making sense of the message in the text” (Carter & McCarthy 1988: 204). This means that it is necessary to understand cohesive ties semantically, as well as grammatically. Hence, it can be considered that a knowledge of lexical cohesion might help L2 learners understand discourse.

As mentioned above (See Introduction), the subjects investigated are in Extensive Reading classes, which are aimed at getting students used to reading English books without the aid of dictionaries as well as to cultivate their ability to interpret the story. They are encouraged to pay attention not to grammar or individual word meaning, but to coherence of the story. Therefore, students are supposed to practice guessing new word meanings and understand the content at discourse level. Hence, this paper will focus on investigating how the knowledge of discourse organising vocabulary, especially lexical cohesion, helps students in understanding the text.

## **2. Methodology**

For the purpose of investigating how the knowledge of cohesion helps L2 learners reading and writing in English, three short stories were selected: “Soapy’s Choice” and “The Memento” from O. Henry’s collection *New Yorkers* (1990), which has been adapted for the Graded Readers series (reading activity) and “Magic Spinach” (2000) by Carol Eron and Fulang Lo (writing activity). The exercises were given to first year students of two extensive reading classes, each class consisting of 40 students, at a university in Nagoya, Japan. All subjects are English majors and are generally considered to be motivated to learn English.

### **2.1 Reading Activity**

Two short stories were mainly used for the exercises: “Soapy’s Choice” and “The Memento.” In fiction, generally speaking, readers cannot expect authors to provide all the information needed to understand the story directly and clearly. It often happens that authors make subtle references to it in the text and readers have to find words and phrases that signal information. That is, readers are required to gather essential information

in understanding the story from key words/phrases in the text. The reading activities given students were designed to encourage them to collect the necessary information in a text to understand the story more accurately by paying attention to lexical cohesion. In the first class, lexical cohesion was explained to students when they read “Soapy’s Choice.” In the second class, students practiced applying the knowledge of cohesion to understanding “The Memento” with the aid of the teacher. In each class, the same exercises were given to students: requiring them to find clues related to: (1) place of story, (2) time, and (3) character traits. The three exercises were expected to indicate the degree to which students could use the knowledge of cohesion for the interpretation of stories.

## **2.2 Writing Activity**

This activity is designed to investigate how much students make use of cohesion in their writing. After reading “Magic Spinach,” students were requested to write a sequel to the story. This writing activity was given after the reading activity had been completed. Students were permitted to view the text and use a dictionary while writing. Before commencing to write, students were provided with the same exercises as in the Reading Activity, determining place, time, main character’s traits, as well as any other collocational links with the aid of the knowledge of cohesion. This was done in order to help students design a plot to the sequel of the story.

## **3. Discussion: Analysis and Results**

### **3.1 Reading Activity**

#### **3.1.1 Exercise 1: Understanding the Place**

This exercise was designed to introduce students to the knowledge of the relationship among words/phrases in the text. In the class reading “Soapy’s



Choice,” students were requested to select words delivering the necessary information concerning ‘place’ in the first page. It clearly shows that the place is New York, and students had no trouble in locating the clue words and answering correctly. Students, however, should have been expected to find other words to determine the more accurate location. ‘Madison Square’ and ‘Broadway’ are recognised as lexical items that are being collocationally linked to ‘New York,’ and they can more clearly determine the place in New York. Three students out of 80 chose ‘Broadway’ as another key word but none chose ‘Madison Square.’ This shows the fact that students could not find the collocational link among ‘New York,’ ‘Broadway,’ and ‘Madison Square.’ The same exercise was given to students in the next class reading “The Memento.” That is, they were requested to determine the place of this story by finding clue words.

The first page of “The Memento” does not mention that the place is New York, but all students could find the clue word ‘Broadway’ and determine that the main character is in New York. This means that in the first class students had understood that ‘Broadway’ has a collocational tie with ‘New York’. Hence, it can be considered that the knowledge lexical cohesion could help students catching the place in this story. Moreover, this result shows that students had learned in the first class, not only the lexical cohesion between the clue items, but also the cultural knowledge that Broadway is in New York. Collocation should be identified by the meaning of words, as well as by potential meaning which is shared by native speakers generally. Therefore, understanding relationships among words/phrases depend on:

Individual responses to the presence of lexical associations and evaluative elements in a text as well as on the kinds of knowledge of a field of

discourse or topic needed for lexical set construction.

(Carter 1998: 83)

This can explain why none of the students chose ‘Madison Square’ in the first class of “Soapy’s Choice.” The reason was that the words ‘Madison square’ were new to students. In fact, 78 students had had no idea what/where Madison Square was. The lack of background knowledge neither enabled students to find ‘Madison Square’ through “the presence of lexical associations” with New York, nor to make the “lexical set construction.” That is, a lack of cultural knowledge prevented them from determining lexical cohesion.

The importance of cultural knowledge for lexical cohesion was also shown in an extra reading class, “A Walk in Amnesia,”<sup>2</sup> which was held after the second class. Here students practiced choosing collocational words mentioning the place and determining where the main character was from. The correct answer ‘from Denver, Colorado’ is clearly mentioned in the text, though he is in New York now. 49 students could find clue words and answer correctly. On the other hand, 31 students answered incorrectly. 19 cases out of 31 resulted in the entire misunderstanding of the story, when they mistook one man for the other. The remaining 12 cases involve students’ confusion of cultural knowledge. Here are samples of three students chosen at random, which show clue items that they had listed and the place which they determined.

Student	Key Words	Location
A	Denver, NY,	Denver in New York
B	New York, Kansas, Missouri, Manhattan, Denver	Denver, USA
C	New York, Denver	New York City in Denver

This indicates that students could not distinguish the place correctly. All students could choose words mentioning the location, but words they chose show that they could not build the collocational links. All of the words that were chosen by the students can be collocationally tied to USA. Therefore, Student B answered “Denver, USA.” The other students, however, tried to determine a more accurate place, and they answered incorrectly. Student A misunderstood that Denver was in New York, not in Colorado, and Student C misunderstood that New York City was in Colorado. It can be considered that the wrong answers were caused by the lack of knowledge of place names. Namely, even though they could recognise words expressing the place (this means that they were beginning to understand lexical cohesion), they cannot build the correct cohesion due to a lack of cultural knowledge. This result also shows that cultural knowledge is necessary to create lexical cohesion.

### **3.1.2 Exercise 2: Understanding Time**

After Exercise 1, students proceeded to the ‘time comprehension’ exercise, and were requested to find clue words determining time in the story. The first page of “Soapy’s Choice” includes the clue items: ‘dead leaf,’ ‘winter,’ ‘cold,’ and ‘coat,’ which have cohesive ties. Students’ answers were mostly split into ‘winter’ and ‘autumn.’ Here are the results of students’ answers:

Time	Key Words	No. of answers
winter	winter	63
	dead leaf, winter	
	winter, cold, coat	
	dead leaf, winter, cold	
autumn	dead leaf,	10
the end of autumn	dead leaf, winter, cold	3
no answer		4

63 of 80 students answered that it was winter, pointing at ‘winter’ as the clue item. Ten students answered that it was autumn, pointing at ‘dead leaf’ as the clue item. Words/phrases chosen by students show that they understood lexical cohesion. Hence, it seems that they could make use of it to determine the time. When the text is read more carefully, however, neither ‘winter’ nor ‘autumn’ is a satisfactory answer: the more accurate answer should be ‘the end of autumn.’ Even though three students answered correctly, it does not mean that they got the meaning from lexical cohesion. In fact, they chose ‘Winter was coming’ as other clue items. In this story, ‘coming’ also has to be considered as an important referent to the more accurate time: winter has not come yet, but it is ‘coming’ now. ‘Coming’ cannot create collocation with ‘winter’ lexically, but it is semantically linked with ‘winter’ and creates lexical cohesion in this story. This indicates that it is necessary to understand discourse organising words not only lexically but also semantically. Understanding the relationship between lexical items linked cohesively enables students to understand coherence of the story and to find the more precise time. The same exercise was repeated in the class reading “The Memento,” the results of which are as follows (three students were absent):

Answer	Key words	No. of students
summer	summer	48
autumn	autumn	16
the end of summer	summer, autumn	22

On the first page of “The Memento”, it is difficult to find cohesive items concerning ‘time.’ ‘Summer’ and ‘autumn’ are words telling the time, but no other words can be found. When the text is analysed from the view of the story’s coherence, it can be possible to determine other items connected with them: ‘hotel,’ ‘rest for summer’ and ‘work for autumn.’ ‘Summer’ has a collocational link with ‘hotel’ and ‘rest,’ while ‘autumn’ has that with ‘work’ in this story. Other clue items concerning time are, “She was staying in the Hotel Thalia” and “Actors go there [Hotel Thalia] to rest for summer.” That is, the woman’s stay at the hotel tells that the time is summer, since ‘hotel’ is collocationally linked with ‘summer’ in this story. As seen in the exercise of “Soapy’s Choice” above, this shows that lexical cohesion is insufficient to determine the time. It is necessary to understand that fiction has its original collocational links: summer-hotel-rest, autumn-work. Brown and Yule (1983) argue that “the source of the formal cohesion is, in a sense, outside the text and should not be sought in the words-on-the-page” (Brown & Yule 1983: 198). The formal collocation cannot help students understand the story sufficiently. It is necessary to find the original collocation, creating the coherence of the story in order to gain the necessary information.

In addition to this, there is another clue item which appears on the second page of “The Memento.” ‘[B]egin work’ and ‘next week’ are words referring to the time along with clue items on the first page, indicating to readers that summer is finishing now. As a result, when the text is

read more precisely, the more accurate time frame should be ‘the end of summer.’ Here, it is important to consider the distance of cohesive items in a text. As mentioned above (See 2.1), the authors hint at the necessary information in fiction, and it can be considered that clue items should be accumulated, as the story progresses. This makes it necessary to look through the whole text in order to interpret the story more precisely. 22 students, who could answer correctly, could make cohesion by collecting clue items beyond the first page. The matter of the distance of cohesive tie will be discussed more in the next section.

### 3.1.3 Exercise 3: Understanding the Main Character

In this exercise, students were requested to explain the main character at first and show clue items which are used to understand the main character (though in Exercises 1 & 2 they had to find key words prior to determining the answer). In the class of “Soapy’s Choice,” all students answered ‘Soapy is a homeless’[*sic*] (‘homeless’ is used as a noun meaning ‘a homeless person’ in Japanese). The word ‘homeless’ cannot be found in the text, and it shows what students concluded from the clue words. This means that students collected words collocationally tied with ‘homeless.’ Here are samples of clue items, which five random students chose:

Student	Key words
D	newspapers did not keep out the cold
E	at night on his seat, newspaper, cold, prison,
F	nice warm prison, food, friend
G	dirty old trousers, terrible shoes
H	at night on his seat, newspapers, cold, no luck, no money, dirty old trousers, terrible shoes

It is interesting that students used different clue words, although they arrived at the same answer. Students found two kinds of lexical cohesion: one expressing Soapy's poorness, and the other expressing Soapy's desire to go to prison. The *poorness* is shown by Students D, E, G and H, while the *desire* is by Student F. This means that students could understand and build lexical cohesion in a text to find the main character's traits.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the resource which students used to build up the collocation is different: Students D, E and F chose key words from the first page, though Student G chose them from the second page. Interestingly, Student H searched through the whole text to collect clue items. Here is the matter of the distance of cohesive tie, which was touched upon above, and which has been discussed by researchers (Halliday & Hasan 1976; Carter 1998; Martin 2001). The argument in the text can be developing as the discourse proceeds, and words, which are significantly collocated in the argument, are coherently related with his evaluation of the discussion. In discourse, words determining values can be subjected to a process of negotiation.

[U]nderstanding the semantic relations between parts of a text should also involve the ability to interact with the text so that different points of view can be evaluated and varied inferences negotiated.

(Carter 1998: 88)

Regarding fiction, it is possible that an author's evaluation is accumulated on a particular matter, as a story progresses. Brown & Yule (1983) state that potentially changing words establish:

a referent in his mental representation of the discourse and relates subsequent references to that referent back to his mental representation, rather than to

the original verbal expression in the text.

(Brown & Yule 1983: 200)

This means that it is necessary to view the whole story in order to understand the author's argument. The importance of evaluation implied by words can be seen in the result of "The Memento." All students answered from the first page that the main character was 'an actress.' The word 'actress' is used in the text, but it is not a satisfactory answer in explaining the main character. Students were encouraged to find more lexical clues and provide a more detailed explanation of the main character. Samples of five random students' works are shown as follows:

Student	Key words	Description
I	actress, Broadway,	actress
J	actress, Broadway, theatres	actress
K	actress, Broadway did not need her	unpopular actress
L	actress, Broadway, small room	poor actress,
M	actress, Broadway did not need her, many mementoes	middle-aged actress,

The clue words chosen by Students I & J show the formal collocation, but other students could find other evaluating words which are linked with 'actress' as well. That is, they collected the word describing the main character, as well as words holding the formal collocation. '[N]ot need her' (Student K) tells that the actress is not popular now, 'small room' (Student L) indicates that she cannot afford to live in a big room, and 'many mementoes' (Student M) tells that she has a long career as an actress. These words are semantically linked with 'actress' and add the author's evaluation to the main character's traits. The evaluating words enable the formal collocation in the text to include new collocationally



linked words, which may be invalid outside it. Namely, in the case of this story, it is possible that the word ‘actress’ collocationally ties with ‘small room’ and ‘many mementoes,’ as well as ‘Broadway’ and ‘theatres.’ This means that it is necessary to develop the formal lexical cohesion to apply it to the text. The developed cohesion leads readers to a coherent interpretation of the text.

### **3.2 Writing Activity**

Out of 80 writing tasks, three were chosen at random to investigate the influence of the knowledge of cohesion on writing. The story of “Magic Spinach” ended when the landlord was turned into a toad because of the magic stone, which he grabbed from a good villager called ‘the son.’ Students were requested to write the new story following the original text: what became of the landlord after this? Before starting writing, exercises to find lexical cohesion in the text were given as preparation. As they had done in the Reading Activity (See Section 3.1), students created the following collocational links from the text with the aid of the teacher in order to understand the story:

### Lexical Cohesion in the Text

	Words
Reiteration	spinach – leaves – plant
Formal collocation	son – mother fresh – leaves – spinach – uproot – plant flood – water – floodwater rice – jar landlord – village thirsty – water – drank water – toad
Collocation valid in the story	stone – rice – filled up stone – magic – glinting – smooth - round landlord – toad - turned
Collocation of evaluating words	mother – old – blind son – remarkable landlord – kicked the stone – snatched the stone

Based on the cohesive words prepared above, students constructed the plot of their story. Lexical cohesion, which was determined in the preparation exercise, is shown as underlined and other lexical cohesion, which is original to students' writing tasks, is shown in italics.

#### Student N

After that, he who turned into a toad is getting harder and harder. At last he became a just *gray stone*. But the *stone* suddenly *shined*. At the time, the son found the just *gray stone* out. He took it home and put it the rice jar. Next day, he opened the rice jar, it was *full* of *rice*. It means he who was a toad *turned into the magic stone*. The son and blind mother lived happily using the magic stone. [italics and underlining mine]

This shows that Student N created the new collocation: gray[gre]y – stone – shined, turn – toad – magic – stone, full – rice. It can be said that the new

collocation came from the original collocation in the text. ‘full of rice’ is based on ‘rice – filled up.’ ‘grey’ and ‘shined’ are created to describe more about the stone. ‘turned into the magic stone’ shows the most distinctive part of this task. Student N developed the original plot ‘turned into a toad’ and created a new story. The collocational link ‘magic stone → turned → toad’ is improved to the new link ‘toad → turned → magic stone.’

Student O

He turned to *toad* and lived in his village. He hoped to *turn back* to be *human beings*. He didn’t know what to do. He tried everything he could to *turn back* to be *human beings* but he couldn’t. He lived as a *toad* forever in his village because the *magic* made his *life* forever. One day, one *high school* used him and other *toads* to *anatomize* for *biology class* and he is *anatomized* by students. However they didn’t kill him so he is still living alone with the *scar*. [italics mine]

This does not have the same collocation as that in the original text, but new word links can be found. Getting an idea from the original cohesion ‘magic stone → turned → toad,’ Student O created the new word link ‘turn back → human beings.’ Moreover, it is clear that the student developed the new word link ‘toad – biology – high school – class – anatomize – scar’ through the general cohesion of ‘toad.’ As a result, this enabled the student to use more variant words in the text. The strong influence of the knowledge of lexical cohesion can give the text more rhetorical proficiency.

Student P

The *toad couldn't speak* words and he couldn't be realized that the toad is the landlord by villagers. So he gave up living as human beings and he decided to live in *river* like REAL *toad*. He regretted what he had done a *greedy* thing. His character became *good* for having become a *toad*. [italics and underline mine]

This shows the influence by the original collocation 'landlord – villagers,' as well as the new collocation based on the formal collocation of 'toad': toad – cannot speak, toad – river. In addition to them, this student created new relationships among words from evaluating ones. The cohesive words 'landlord – kicked the stone – snatched the stone' shows the landlord's supercilious and despotic attitude. This produced a new collocation: 'landlord – greedy.' Moreover, the transformation from a landlord to a toad caused the student to make another transformation from bad to good. Hence, a new collocation based on evaluating words was produced: toad – good. As a result, it can be seen that Student P applied the understanding of lexical cohesion to the writing. In other words, the knowledge of lexical cohesion helped the student in making new collocational links, as well as creating coherence of the story.

The students' writing tasks investigated above, show that they made use of the original collocations in the text to create a new story, as well as construct new collocations, which can be recognised to be based on the original cohesion. That is, with the aid of lexical cohesion in the original text, students could not only develop the interpretation of the original story, but also plot the new story and use more varied words. It can be considered that the writing tasks investigated here were more strongly influenced by the original text, since the aim of this writing activity is to

create a new story following it. This, however, helped students produce coherence in their stories. As a result, it can be said that a knowledge of lexical cohesion can help students interpret the story, develop vocabulary and give coherence to their writing.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, how the knowledge of discourse organising vocabulary can help L2 learners reading and writing was investigated. Since the classes used for this research are supposed to encourage students to make use of the knowledge of discourse organizing vocabulary in order to interpret the story more, this paper focused particularly on lexical cohesion. In the Reading Activity, the result of the analysis showed the considerable effect that the knowledge of lexical cohesion has on their understanding of the story. The necessary information, which authors hint at in the text, could be exposed by paying attention to the cohesive ties among words. There were, however, occasions when L2 learners needed to improve in order to make the general knowledge of lexical cohesion more useful for reading: acquiring cultural knowledge, expanding the area of lexical cohesion to the whole text, creating original cohesion which is valid only in a particular text, and comprehending that collocationally linked words in an argument can be related to the writer's evaluation. As a result, it can be considered that the knowledge of lexical cohesion can help students in comprehending the coherence of the story as well. In the Writing Activity, students made use of their knowledge of lexical cohesion for interpreting the story and effectively applied it to writing a story. As a result of using lexical cohesion, students' stories showed a more varied vocabulary and coherent plot. This means that a knowledge of lexical cohesion helped students to write more effectively. In fact, from the questionnaire given to 80 students after

the Reading and Writing Activity, it was found that 64 students answered ‘Strongly I think so (n=28)’ or ‘I think so (n=36)’ in response to the question ‘Do you think that the knowledge of lexical cohesion could help in your reading/writing?’ Hence, it can be said that a lexical knowledge is effective in improving L2 learner’s reading/writing ability.

For better reading, it is necessary for L2 learners to understand relationships among vocabulary items in discourse, and for better writing, it is necessary to exploit the relationships deliberately. It is important as well, however, to understand the relationship between cohesion and coherence, as mentioned in Section 1.3. As Celce-Marcia & Olshtain (2000) state, cohesion and coherence are two important features found in a well-known text. Considering that reading is interpreting discourse and writing is creating discourse, it is significant to make use of cohesion to interpret/create coherence in a text. Ultimately, cohesion is one function to create coherence in discourse.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

<sup>2</sup> From O. Henry’s collection *New Yorkers* (1990).

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